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SUBJECT: IDP CRISIS IN GOZ BEIDA

REF: N'DJAMENA 01327

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) Goz Beida has become significantly more unstable as a result of attacks on villages which have produced a new wave of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Attempts to tally numbers of individuals and families are underway, but UNHCR staff from the town of Kou Kou-Angarana estimated that recent IDP arrivals could number up to 5,000. A scorched-earth policy meanwhile is underway as Arab attackers, the majority of whom are suspected to be Chadian, enter and burn villages in an intensified conflict over land and grazing rights. While on a mission to visit the remains of a village in Leboutique I, OFDA official and Poloff were forced to evacuate after warning shots were fired as their delegation toured the site. There is no time or geographic pattern to the attacks, and UNHCR Goz Beida reports that many attacks occur simultaneously, suggesting an increased level of sophistication among organizers and perpetrators of the violence. In response, five Government of Chad (GOC) Ministers have been deployed in the Goz Beida vicinity. END SUMMARY.

SKYROCKETING INSECURITY

2. (SBU) Since November 5-6, sustained attacks on villages in and around Goz Beida by marauding bands of Arabs have resulted in scores of villages attacked, looted and burned; in innumerable civilian casualties; and in a new wave of IDPs. UNHCR staff from Kou Kou-Angarana estimated that IDPs, now sleeping on roadsides between Goz Beida and Kerfi and under trees throughout the region, could number up to 5,000. The Goz Beida Hospital has no more beds available to treat the flow of gunshot wounds and burn patients it is receiving, and UNICEF is providing mats and blankets for those "non-critical" overflow patients who are forced to sleep outside on the hospital grounds. Hospital staff told Poloff November 13 they were expecting two truckloads of wounded from violence in Koloi within the next 24 hours.

3. (SBU) New IDPs (about 200 families) from the village of Domboli (15 km from Goz Beida) recounted for Poloff what seems to be the standard modus operandi of the recent attacks. These IDPs had fled their village on November 10, after a group of 30 Arabs entered at approximately 09:00, opened fire on the local population and then confiscated their animals. The Arabs stayed in the village for three days to ensure it was emptied of villagers.

4. (SBU) Victims of the violence are from the Dadjo tribe, and the perpetrators are "Arab," according to IDPs. This group includes local Chadian Arabs, members of tribes allied with Chadian Arabs (including the Mimi

and the Ouddai) and Janjaweed elements. The attackers are reported to be on horseback carrying Kalashnikovs, and so far the Goz Beida Hospital has confirmed only one Arab alliance injury, a Mimi (tribal group affiliated with Arabs) woman who was beaten by her Dajjo neighbors. IDPs reported to both UNHCR and to Poloff that it was difficult to tell Chadians from Sudanese in the attacks, the majority of which took them by surprise. There is widespread confirmation among those attacked that the perpetrators "are our neighbors," illustrating the Chadian-against-Chadian nature of the crisis.

15. (SBU) Poloff and visiting OFDA representative experienced this latest violence firsthand on November 13 when they, along with several UNHCR representatives, were touring the village of Leboutingue I, which had just been attacked and burned. Less than ten minutes into the visit, at least three shots from an approximate distance of 500m were fired, presumably as a warning to the delegation, which was inspecting and photographing the devastation. The group was forced back to their two vehicles and left the scene without further incident. Both Embassy N'Djamena and UNHCR were alerted immediately. NBC News reported the incident and noted that USAID staff has been shot at.

16. (SBU) Speculation remains over the motivation for this latest campaign of ethnic violence. UNHCR Goz Beida describes it as a conflict over land and grazing rights. On the one hand, villagers accuse the Arabs of burning grazing land (which was observed ablaze by Poloff on November 13) to prevent their return to the region. On the other hand, Arabs contend that the

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villagers themselves set fire to grazing land as they were fleeing in a desperate attempt to prevent the attackers' return to the region with their cattle, horses and camels.

GOC RESPONDS

17. (SBU) The GOC dispatched five Ministers - Defense, Public Security, Cooperation, Agriculture and Interior - to Goz Beida and Kerfi in response to violence there following announcement of a state of emergency (reftel), but UNHCR Goz Beida claims that any concerted GOC plan of action remains unarticulated. The statement by the GOC placed the blame for this insecurity squarely on Sudan. As part of the GOC's declaration of a state of emergency, the GOC was imposing "pre-broadcast censorship" on all media reporting in Chad. As if to prove its point, the Goz Beida Prefet expelled Radio France One reporter Sonja Rolley, an accredited journalist whose radio commentaries in French are broadcast throughout the country, from Goz Beida on the morning of November 13, hours before the state of emergency was declared. NBC and New York Times journalists reporting from Goz Beida proceeded with their live coverage from the camps but feared confiscation of equipment upon exit from the country.